527 up with the habits of other important days. In some districts
883 it is set up at Easter.

May-trees are not distributed freely in every village. There are places in which only one common tree is set up in front of the church. In one village Whitsun habits have been mingled with the May-tree custom. On Whit-Monday the lads who set up the common May-tree accompany one of their number on horseback, who is covered with green leaves as is also his horse, to every house where there is a marriageable girl. Surrounding their leaf-covered companion in the middle of the courtyard, they ask for May-tree money, threatening that unless they get it, the horseman will gallop round the whole yard. This lad, clothed in green, reminds one of certain rain conjuring customs.

There exists that other custom as well, whereby the lads elect from amongst themselves a «sad king», who — like the Witsun queen — is not allowed to laugh while they make the round of the girls' houses. Just as at Easter, so now too they get presents. This «sad king» reminds one of the initiation ceremony of some primitive peoples... In a serious initiation the candidate must not show fright nor laugh at any joke.

527 As in customs connected with budding twigs in general,
[751] the May-tree may have had power to prevent illness and ward off evils, or it may have had a purifying effect in general. At least according to popular belief!

[713] The May-tree set up in front of the church is a symbol of the restraining and ennobling tendency of the Christian religion. The first of May is the day of the apostles Philip and James. The tree set up in front of the church recalls the miracle of the stick of the virgin, who went with them. As for getting rid of evils, it is well known that Saint Philip freed the town of Phrygia from a terrible man-eating serpent: — «... While he prayed the terrible snake died and the town was released...»